

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**RECORD OF DECISION**

Vessel Quotas and Operating Requirements for Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve

**INTRODUCTION**

This record of decision documents the National Park Service (NPS, also “the Park Service”) decision to modify quotas and operating requirements for four types of motorized watercraft – cruise ships and tour, charter, and private vessels – in Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve. The decision addresses the continuing demand for motorized watercraft access into Glacier Bay in a manner that protects park resources and values while also providing a range of rewarding opportunities for visitors consistent with park purposes and values.

The decision improves the current system used to manage motorized vessel traffic in Glacier Bay. The need to review vessel quotas stems from legislation enacted in 2001, wherein the U.S. Congress directed the Park Service to set the maximum level of motorized vessel entries in accordance with the analysis in an environmental impact statement (EIS). Based on the results of public and internal scoping in spring 2002, the Park Service expanded the review to include vessel quotas and operating requirements and to address Glacier Bay and Dundas Bay (see figure). The Park Service prepared an EIS, as required, under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 and Council of Environmental Quality regulations (40 *Code of Federal Regulations* [CFR] 1500). The draft EIS (DEIS) was issued in March 2003. A *Federal Register* (FR) notice announcing the availability of the final EIS (FEIS) was published by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on October 10, 2003, commencing the required 30-day no-action period (62 FR 3681).

Implementation of the decision will require promulgation of regulations, revising 36 CFR 13.65. Draft regulations should be published for public comment in 2004. Final regulations are anticipated by early 2005.

**BACKGROUND**

Measures to address vessel traffic in Glacier Bay were first implemented in 1979 to respond to concerns regarding the effects of motor vessels on the endangered humpback whale. Regulations went into effect in 1980, and additional regulations were promulgated in 1985. Since then, concerns have broadened to encompass potential effects on other biota, the physical environment, and visitor experience.

In 1996, the Park Service completed an environmental assessment (EA) and issued a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) regarding vessel quotas and operating requirements that, among other things, provided for increases in quotas for cruise ships, charter vessels, and private vessels in Glacier Bay. The decision allowed for 139 cruise ships throughout the June-through-August season, with potential for incremental increases to 184 ships (i.e., up to two cruise ships per day), based on scientific and other information and applicable authorities.